

# Employer Branding : Critical imperatives of the time

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## ABSTRACT

*In the competitive driven corporate landscape, people are emerging as the soundest asset. Talented people will have to be handled with uncommon tact and care. Top – notch talent are the key source of competitive advantage for the firm .Companies are going all out to ensnare and retain talented employees with a view to achieving and sustaining the decisive edge in the hyper – competitive market. The trajectory of the development is that there is a sharp spike in demand for the top – notch people. On the flip side, the talented employees are in short supply. The yawning gap between demand for and supply of talent is more pronounced and being felt badly. The reasons could be ascribed to lack of awareness and hands – on learning. So attracting the right talent has become an arduous task for companies.*

*To compound the matter further, the ballooning attrition levels and talent retention have become major issues that the HR Practitioners are grappling with. In this context, employer branding has come as shot in the arms for the companies.*

*Employer building is aimed at building and bolstering the ultimate image of the company at the two levels – Chiefly internal as well as external. Creating a strong and robust employer brand needs unswerving involvement and support from the employees. Organization should became alive to the reality that recruitment exercise will have to be managed pretty much the same manner the customers are being managed. Employer branding cannot operate purely in HR Silo. The whole gamut of people ranging from employer to customer to HR Professionals and marketing executive will have to be involved in creating a robust employer brand.*

## Introduction

In today's microcosmic world of business, employees have emerged as a critical source of competitive advantage. Labor market landscape is on the cusp of profound transmutation. Call it a sheer paradox or sweet irony, there is a huge surge in demand for best-of-the-breed talent. At another level, top-notch talents are hard to come by. In aesthetically designed corporate-boardrooms, a pitched battle for talent is being fought ferociously. <sup>1</sup>According to a study conducted by McKinsey & Co, the most <sup>2</sup>important corporate resource that will emerge in the next two decades will be the talent with a capital T. According to the report, smart, sophisticated people who are astute, tech-savvy and nimble-footed are likely to be the most sought after. The report further adds that the demand for such talent may inexorably outstrip the supply. Organizations have traversed quite a long distance from industrial age to cutting-edge information age. In this journey, companies have seen the value of their hard assets dwindle irreversibly as against the worth of intangible assets. The value of the intangible assets, which include among other things intellectual capital, brands and out-of-the-box ideas has considerably appreciated in the recent times. The forces that underlie all these intangible are called talent. In the new age economy, generating capital has become easier, competition has become ubiquitously global, and ideas can be replicated

swiftly and cost effectively. To top it all, Employees have little compunction in hopping around the job frequently. In such a fluid situation, talent counts a great deal. The war for talent is a stark business reality. Going forward, it will continue to re-define the broader contours of work force strategies of the company. The trajectory of the development is that the success of organization today hinges purely on its ability to attract, build and retain best-of-the-breed-talent. Companies face lots of trouble in finding a right talent with relevant skill sets. For example, in countries like India and Japan millions of IT jobs are up for grabs. But one very often hears the babble of complaints from IT head honchos whining about the trouble they have in finding the right talent. At another level, skill sets companies are looking for is increasingly becoming more complex, specific and defined. For instance, in western countries, getting finance and accounting professionals are trifling easy. But getting people with niche skills and experience is an uphill task. Companies are not able to find people with niche expertise in forensic and international accounting. The problem of finding the right talent with relevant skill sets is not germane to Accounts and Finance profession alone. The problem cuts across wide swathe of professions today. In the light of this background, employer branding has soared in importance

The concept of employer branding gained currency in the early 1990's. The term employer branding was coined by Tim Ambler and Simon Borrow (1996).<sup>3</sup> According to Tim Ambler and Simon Borrow, employer branding refers to the package of functional, economical and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with employing company.<sup>4</sup> According to Lloyd, Employment branding refers to sum total of an organization efforts to communicate to the potential and current employees that it is great place to work.<sup>5</sup> According to Society for Human Resource Management, employer branding refers to the image of the company as a great place to work in the minds of current employees and important stakeholders in the external market.<sup>6</sup> A feted and famed organization called Reputation institute beautifully captures the essence of what employer branding is all about? Reputation institute measures the overall respect, admiration, good feelings and esteem that consumers possess vis-à-vis a company, its brands and values. A research model constructed by the Reputation institute points to fact that reputation is inexplicably tied to 7 core elements –namely

Products/services, innovation, workplace, citizenship, governance, leadership and performance. Undoubtedly, all these seven elements inherently involve the people (aka employees). In effect, employees will have to be highly knowledgeable about the corporate brand values and reputation in the same breath as any advertising agencies do. This is what is euphemistically known as employer branding.<sup>7</sup> According to Ruchira Chowdary, Bridges Business Consultancy, employer branding means the process through which a company consciously differentiates and communicates its reputation as an employer to both current and potential employees. In nutshell, organizations external brand should dovetail with its internal proposition to its employees.<sup>8</sup> According to Christine Johnson, director, Employee Communications, Employer branding is nothing but capturing the essence of company in a manner that engages employees. He goes on to add that employer branding articulates the nuances of value proposition i.e. the sum total of organization culture, system, attitude and relationships.<sup>9</sup> According to a consultancy firm versants work, .employer

<sup>3</sup> Amber .T and Barrow Simon (1996): Employer Branding ,Journal Of Brand Management ,4(3),pp184

<sup>4</sup> Lloyd(2002) Branding From Inside Out ,BRW, 24(10),pp-64-66

<sup>5</sup> SHRM-Employer Brand: A Strategic Tool to Attract ,Recruit and Retain Talent , April/June 2008

<sup>6</sup> Heather Bacigalupo , "Employer branding-Your customers know your brand & values...do your employees"- Retrieved from net <http://www.bridgepartnersllc.com/Newsletters/2008-August.pdf> on 29th October 09

<sup>7</sup> Ruchira Chaudary, Bridges Business Consultancy: How to build your brand from the inside out, retrieved from net [www.bridgesconsultancy.com/newsroom/articles/brand.pdf](http://www.bridgesconsultancy.com/newsroom/articles/brand.pdf) on 29 October 09

<sup>8</sup> Phaedra burke , "employer branding as a recruitment and retention tool" n<http://www.themattamgroup.com/pdf/Employer-Branding.pdf> , 29 th October 09

<sup>9</sup> Activating the Employer Brand: Retrieved from net- [http://www.versantsolutions.com/uploadedFiles/\\_media/\\_pdf/Employer\\_Branding.pdf](http://www.versantsolutions.com/uploadedFiles/_media/_pdf/Employer_Branding.pdf)

*branding refers to companies' image as seen through the prism of existing and potential employees. The firm expounds that employer branding engage employees, foster pride and job satisfaction in a same vein a popular consumer brand engenders trust, widespread approval and an overwhelming intent to buy. A robust employer branding can catapult company in to an enviable "employer of choice" league. The consultancy firm further avers that it is the employment experience that underpins a strong employer branding. Employment experience encompasses both tangibles and intangibles. Tangible includes salary, perks and wide palette of benefits. Intangible includes, among other things organization's culture, the values, career progression, learning opportunities, reward, recognition and leadership. The firm further contends that it is employment experience which ultimately engages employees. Talented people seek employment experience that is in sync with their needs and will not hesitate to leave organizations that do not deliver on their expectations.*

### **What is "Branding" Hullabaloo all about?**

Any one well acquainted with marketing knows too well about Brand, Brand Equity and brand standards. More often than not, we tend to take a myopic view of Branding. One may presume Branding to be an exercise of applying logo or trademark to an organization's communication or even worse packaging. In a broader sweep,

Branding is an on-going endeavor. Branding is all about a process where both the tangible and intangible element that together makes up an organization's reputation and its image are neatly strung together and is effectively communicated. In effect, branding assumes a life of its own. Branding spurs satisfaction levels and promotes unflinching loyalty. When a branding is looked up on as an embodiment of an organization, it morphs in to a crucial asset that requires closer attention. Marketers have successfully got people to understand and respond to product-related brands. Customers, for their part, have a better conception of what companies external branding epitomizes? In the recent past, the companies have gravitated towards employee branding. Employee branding is predicated upon the idea that marketing to employees is critical and a sure-shot winning strategy. If the company is keen on dovetailing employees' talent and behavioral pattern with the core business priorities, then attracting and retaining employees become a matter of paramount significance.

External branding influences the customer to buy, repurchase and recommend company products / service to others. The underlying objective is to morph in to a product or service provider of choice. Employer or internal branding motivates employees to stay on with the company and realize the broader set of business goals. The underlying objective is to mutate in to an employer of choice.

## **Aligning internal and external brand**

Every company has internal and external brand in place. For long companies have paid greater attention to external brand to the exclusion of internal brand but the scenario is changing for better. The significance of external brand in commanding customer loyalty is well known. Of late, there is growing realization of the critical importance of internal branding as well. A growing body of research suggests that internal branding holds the key to success of external brand. Undoubtedly there is a strong and direct linkage between how the employees look up on the organization and deliver on external brand expectations.

If employees believe in an employer, they pull out all the punches and go all out for their employer. The way forward for the company is to communicate their brands to employees so that they can appreciate, understand, and imbibe the brand values. To put it succinctly, communication holds the key. Many organizations mouth platitudes about employee advocacy. Seldom, do they deliver. Any schism between word and deeds will damage the credibility of the employer beyond repair. Seen in this context, total rewards looks seemingly like a marketing tool. It is a well-thought-out strategy aimed at providing employees a mixture of tangible and intangible proof regarding the values that propel the company forward. The proposition is

fairly simple. Employee work for an employer who they think is an employer of choice and work hard to ratchet up quality levels and service standards. This in turn will makes employer (or read company) a choice of products/service provider for customer. One may wring his/her hand in wonderment thinking "**Hey! Total reward is HR stuff**". It surely is. Just as external and internal branding assume a close-loop system, internal branding & total rewards form the same close-loop system. Internal branding and total reward operate in a typical chicken and eggs fashion, based on how you slice the situation

## **The essence of employer branding**

Underpinning the essence of employer brand is the ability of the company to attract existing as well as potential employees and ensure that both of them can easily relate to the company's culture, business priorities and the brand thereby resulting in positive outcome for it. Employer branding invariably start with the formation of employer brand image. By implications, it means what the senior manager of the company intent to articulate about psychological, functional and economic benefits. It is nothing but the autobiographical view of the **employer value proposition** or euphemistically what you call as "**brand promise**". Employer brand image also impacts the widespread perception employees have about company's reputation in a significant way.

Employees –both the current and prospective- always view the company through the prism of what others say or think or talk about the company. The employer brand image is powered by organization's identity. Organization identity provides an overwhelming answer to the overarching "**who –are –we?**" question which both employees and managers ask. Organisation identity manifest itself in a company's belief system, behavior pattern, language and collective knowledge. Organizational identity *per se* is not a bundle of individual identities. The nub of the issue is that organizational identity possesses a life of its own and is not hinged on people who are working in it. Next is the corporate identity of a company. The corporate identity of the company lays bare its projected image. The image manifests itself explicitly through logos, its public posturing and architecture. Besides, the corporate identity is articulated in terms of organizations *raison d'être*- mission, stratagems and culture. Corporate and organizational identity is an off-shoot of deeply entrenched concept of organization culture. In effect, organizational culture is all about underlying assumptions, values and beliefs that underpins the organization and defines "**the manner in which people do stuff in the organization**". If the employer brand image is all about what it wants to be, employer brand reputation throws a biographical light on "**who-it-is**". Both the potential and existing employees will begin to view the employer brand reputation in a manner

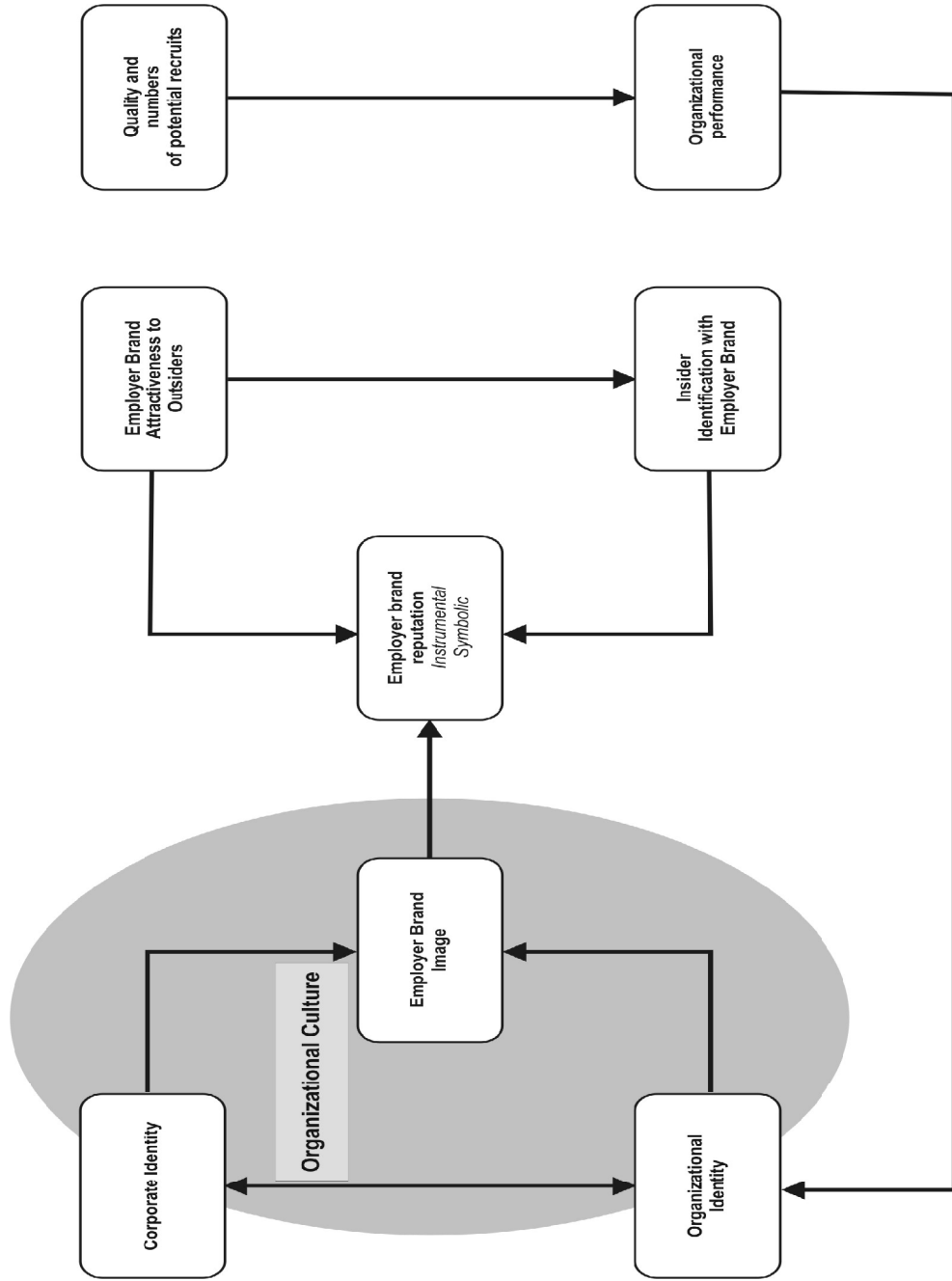
that they form unique notions of organizations lifestyle, atmospherics and interest. Besides biographies will have to be seen or spoken in a pluralistic sense for the sole reason that what one see hinges on what one deeply treasure and where one stand . Different set of individuals may ascribe different meaning and value to different facets of employer brand image. Interestingly, Employer brand reputation operates at two planes. One is to deliver on the instrumental needs of the individuals so that they can realize the tangible, physical benefits. On another plane, employer brand reputation satiates the symbolic needs of people actively looking for a sense of meaning which in turn morphs in to perceptions, effusive feelings and emotions about intangible image of the company

### **Employee branding: is it concept whose time has come?**

There are four major factors that are forcing organizations to granite towards employee branding.

### **Assertion of brand power**

Last two decades have witnessed the phenomenon of emergence of brand as an idea of centrality in corporate and social life. Branding has increasingly spawned powerful, lucrative, strong, money spinning reputation management, cutting- edge consultancy, high profit PR, and recruitment marketing industry



(Source: Reflections on Employer Branding Employer Branding: Time for Some Long and 'Hard' Reflections? : [www.managingpeoplebook.com/.../revised\\_reflections\\_paper\\_june\\_14th.doc](http://www.managingpeoplebook.com/.../revised_reflections_paper_june_14th.doc))

### **Human resource practitioner's eternal search for credibility**

Increasingly, human resource managers are chasing the elusive dream of wielding the strategic levers of power in the organization. Besides human resource professionals across many organizations are striving hard to acquire the credibility tag. Little wonder, companies are learning the new idioms and tools of brand power with brutish excitement

### **Existing labor market conditions**

Another reason for the waxing popularity of employee branding is the state of labor market condition. Unemployment is progressively coming down. The scourge of skill shortage looms menacingly large. Employees are going all out to attract and retain the best talent. In doing so, employees are forced to pay astronomical, unheard of, and jaw-dropping pay packages. A strong employer brand is increasingly being pushed as a strong strategy to win the "war for talent". Companies are creating an exhilarating value proposition centered on the employment and communicating it aggressively.

### **Surging interest in employee engagement**

In recent times, there has been a strong spurt in interest relating to employee engagement. Employee engagement refers to the extent to which employees are emotionally bound to the

organization. It aims at hiring, socializing and retaining employees. From the branding standpoint, recruitment proposition sets the tone for the achieving work place satisfaction and employees ability to relate the big picture of the organization. With the fast emergence of the retail and service sector, where the emphasis is laid on the customer interface, the issues like identity, emotional intelligence, managing human behavior are assuming greater significance. Under such circumstances, human resource policies and practices will have to increasingly reflect on how employee look, speak, feel, think, act and behave in the remit of the brands.

### **Employer brand journey**

Companies will have to spend oodles of time on building, shaping and nurturing an employer brand. Companies should remember that creating an employer brand is not a one-off affair. It cannot be built overnight. Companies allow employees to engage and connect with their brands for considerable period of time. Building a strong, robust and powerful employer brand includes entire stretch of time an employee spends with a company. From applying for a job in the company to quitting the company and every moments of interesting experience of having worked in the company in between, employer has the onerous responsibility of creating, nurturing and re-enforcing an employee's engagement with the



brand. This is known as **employer brand journey**. Employers do their mighty bit in defining the experiences employees undergo when working for them and try to improve each experiences in a manner that increases the understanding of connectedness with the brand. Employers do their mighty bit in defining the experience employees undergo when working for them. Employers try to improve such experiences in a substantive manner that enhances better understanding of and profound connection with the brand. In this context, it is pertinent to re-trace the journey an average employee undertakes in a job.

## **Step -1**

### **Take right people on board**

In this phase, the potential employer is donning the mantle of external stake holder. This is the point where the employer brand juggernaut rolls on. The nub of the issue is what exactly does the external brand convey? For many rank outsiders wanting to get their leg inside, every company has a distinct identity, a rich culture, interesting story and what have you. A slew of employer rankings brought out by business world's "best companies to work for", Hewitt's best employer list, Dataquest "best employer" list, Fortunes "100 best companies to work for", working mother's magazine "100 best companies for working mother" shapes up, impacts and re-inforce the perceptions in a substantive manner. Companies

which zoom its way in to the top of the list have a common thread running through them. These companies offer raft of assignments that will send the adrenaline level rushing, training programmes that are extremely exciting and training programmes that invariably have high growth trajectories. These companies are able to attract best-of-the breed in to its fold. Prospective employees buy in to the external perception. These employers have very effectively created an unambiguous message as to what they have come to epitomize and who they are? Admittedly, these messages are articulated in an effective and consistent manner. A case in point is royal navy. In recent past, royal navy unveiled a spate of recruitment blitzkrieg in a famous men magazine. the campaign screaming "are you man enough" was run for little over one and half month. The ad campaign was conducted via zoo magazine and on line. Royal navy unspooled its recruitment campaign on you tube as well as on mobile telephones. In their bid to ensnare brightest talent, royal navy made extensive use of viral videos on their corporate website and actively goaded the potential hires to pass on the video to other people. Royal navy's ad campaign is such a revelation in the sense it seeks to find out if all the potential employees have what it takes in abundance to be a good marine. The ad clearly put premium on the relevant behavior, mindset and attitude and overlooks the skill sets currently acquired. The

recruitment concept adopted by royal navy makes sure that a compelling message created finds instant resonance with the intended audience in a clinically exact manner and through appropriate channel.

## Step-2

### Welcome to the company

One doesn't get a second opportunity in life to make a first impression. so first impression counts .And how! . Induction provides a first chance to all the new appointee to get a feel of what the company stands for, its goals and work environment. Any new appointee attending such orientation will have to come away feeling absolutely impressed, completely clued in on and positively confident. Companies would do well to remember that there is only so much a person can imbibe on the first day or week and not more. Cramming the day with heavy dose of presentation or videos or motivational talk can take the fizz out of any saner person. People would take to induction programme if it gives them the much-needed space to be interactive, innovative, communicative and creative. Induction programme can work like a magic if the companies are able to iterate what it means to work for the company in to simple but unique induction experience. This is a sure-shot way of stirring the employer brand to life in a effective fashion. For instance, Land rover makes use of power of symbolism to articulate what it

feels to work in there? Land rover's "dipped-in-green" induction programme is extremely popular. Each newly recruited employee gets a first hand feel of being driven around in the Land rover's vehicles .this experience has the effect of stirring the brand to life in a simple ,unique and symbolic manner. The new hires experience the sheer thrill and absolute delight of driving the Land rover

## Step-3

### Getting to work

Companies will find it tougher to get the knowledge amassed and goodwill generated during the induction phase to work Organizations will have to deliver on their expectations. It is an uphill task for any newly recruited employers to balance the mediocre workforce, lack of training opportunities and abysmally lesser management interaction with the company's sleek, stylish, shimmering and sparkling external branding. Precisely, this is the reason why external brands will have to be in perfect alignment with employer brand. Shorn of this alignment between external and internal branding, cynicism may kick in. Companies should adopt a highly integrated and elaborate approach towards all the all dimensions of employee's employment experience so much so that employees remain connected. Employees should have a greater conception of broader set of business goals and how snugly their role fits in to the big picture. Employees should feel that they

have a voice that is heard and not muffled. Employees should feel at ease offering feedback and inputs on matters of issues that impact them. A culture of open and candid communication will have to be built in to organization. Employers would do well to remember that employees can see through any game plan. They watch dutifully what leaders are saying and doing? It would be a catastrophe for an organization if a leader establishes credibility gap. Leaders are the one who create the tone and tenor of a culture with in an organization. Top leadership will have to do whatever it takes to make success of a company and initiate a substantive action to put the company on a higher trajectory. It would be preposterous to expect a CEO to halt at every desk to have a conversation or two with every employee. Against this background, cultural trickle-down theory assumes greater significance. Any psychologist specialized in dealing with children will quip that children tend to mimic the behavior of the parents either at sub-conscious level or wantonly. Organizations are pretty much like that. Employee view leader as a substitute parent- some one they can love, respect, emulate, adore, placate, be worried and frustrated and eventually copy. Leaders set the stage for embracing a particular set of behavior, culture and a manner of working and imbibe them. By doing so, a leader sets personal example and send out a strong signal about his commitment towards the

culture he /she has fostered. People reporting may also be imbued with the behavior that is so typical of the leader. As the next levels of managers demonstrate this behavior, people at various levels are more inclined to breathe and live the employer brand. The process goes on until such time companies realize and internalize the desired set of behaviors

#### **Step-4**

#### **Establishing the brand: reward and recognition holds the key**

If the company is intent on re-enforcing the employer brand, it should hold on to its fold all such employees who breathe, soak and live the brand. Implicit in the meaning is that the right talent will have to be duly recognized and appreciably rewarded for exhibiting the appropriate behavior. Surely employees are not going to bite the bait if carrots alone are dangled out. Undeniably, money has its own seductive appeal. Reward and recognition that is primarily tied to pecuniary gain will not help matters –one cannot retain employee or crank up their productivity level. Excessive reliance on financial gain will send a wrong signal about the company and its priorities. Psychologically speaking, monetary reward always experiences a diminishing return. Its impact is tad too limited. Survey on top of the survey reveals that a sense of personal accomplishment and well-deserved

recognition are on top of priority heap of employees. Recognition and sense of accomplishment act as a powerful **spur**.<sup>1</sup>As per a recent Gallup survey involving a staggered 80,000 employees, recognition holds the key in matters relating to engagement and retention. Recognition was rated fourth amongst twelve dimensions which had a strong co-relation with groups of employee that had better employee retention, soaring productivity levels, greater customer satisfaction and good profitability. Cell phone major Vodafone is gingerly influencing its employees to breathe and live its brand values via a strong recognition programme called legend. The legend programme, currently in its third year identifies and recognizes individuals who breathe and live the brand values of Vodafone in their day-to-day work. Unlike many "me-too" recognition programme that failed to work in the in the past, legend programme inexplicably link recognition to Vodafone's employer brand and fulfillment of its larger objectives. The legend scheme runs like this. Employees will have to appoint colleagues as assessors and they will in turn pick the 100 legends for that specific year. The selected legends will receive recognition and reward from senior management. The impact of the programme is such that it has found resonance amongst employees and recognition has become an integral part of the culture of the company. Nudging and pushing employees to sing hosannas

about each other's work has resulted in build-up of greater satisfaction and strong mutual respect which in turn has ratcheted up employee **engagement significantly**.

## Step-5

### Bidding adieu

Employees may decide to leave an organization for spate of reasons. Some of the reasons are within and outside the ambit of company's control. For any company, bidding adieu to a crucial employee can be very painful. At an employee level, departure from the company can be pleasant or not-so-pleasant. If the exit of an employee from the company is well managed, it will be a pleasant experience for them. Paving the way for a smooth departure of employees is critical in the sense they may be critical stake holders and have a substantive role in companies success. More often than not, they may be the customers or very powerful influencers. They may buy companies products or services or may positively influence the perception of those who are a part of their charmed circle. So the question that begs an answer is "what can companies do to impact positively the manner in which employees still continue to get connected to their erstwhile employer brand. The way forward is –conducting an exit interview which is increasingly becoming a ubiquitous phenomenon. It provides a rarified

platform for both exiting employee and employer to cogitate about the work, environment, warts and all and generate a feedback. For instance, question such as how can company better or align its employees with environment, system, policies, procedures and “big picture”. It is an incredible opportunity for company to tune in to the goings-on and initiate the much-needed change. Such exit interviews also force employees to reflect on cherishable moments they relished in the organization. In the year 2006, NASA discovered that 50% of their workforce was qualified for retirement by choice. Bereft of any better alternative plan, NASA would have to contend with the idea of experienced and knowledgeable people walking out of the front door. NASA made concerted efforts to retain at least a part of that talent through unique exit session called knowledge de-briefs. This one-of-its kind debrief is done by asking employees to write job manuals, case studies ,few best practices followed in NASA ,narrate interesting stories and fables and to hand in their much accessed and used knowledge resources. Once the information is generated, it is stored in a manner that is useful to rest of the employees in NASA. This information adds its might to the learning curve of the new hirers. The information stored is used to leverage on the expertise or knowledge .The fact that NASA initiated the process for such generating such information brought back the treasured memories

and a strong sense of pride. Whenever the experiences have been bad, employees found such information –sharing as a cathartic exercise.

### **Essentials of strong employer branding**

Employer branding has emerged as a seductive buzzword in the corporate landscape. It underscores the perception of company as an employer and is increasingly being seen as an effective antidote to the problems of retaining and attracting the top-notch talent in a hyper competitive setting. Employer branding is not all about a attractively embossed logo, funky letterhead or a neatly crafted advertisement. It is all about an articulation of company’s personality and promises of its culture to the existing and potential employees. While designing an employer brand, employers will have to mull over a raft of considerations.

### **Employer should tailor their proposition to suit the audience**

A solitary proposition, however exciting it may be will not deliver for audience of all hues. Employer should make concerted efforts to get to know his/her audience, appreciate better as to what makes them tick and configure his/her message that will suit them better. The reason is not far to seek. Growing number of companies are configuring their employer brand to suit their intended target audience in doing so, these companies focus heavily

on their audience varied needs, value system, vaulting ambitions and diverse cultural and geographical backdrops. This is primarily because what may work for a older employee may distinctively vary with what works for a current crop of employees drawn from different cultural background. A case in point is Tesco. The company spends good deal of time to understand its target audience and configure their recruitment messages and media accordingly. Financial bellwethers like HSBC, CITICORP and GE configure their value proposition that effectively capture their cultural mores. All the three financial majors are known for their corporate culture that lionizes talent and encourage career advancement and learning opportunities. The current crop of generation have a radically different set of aspirations and expectations. New age employees have no sense of consternation in hopping jobs if their needs do not fructify. Companies will have to manage the new generation of employees with tact and uncommon care. Companies can ill-afford to lose this group as they may miss huge chunk of their workforce

### **Companies will have to dovetail their customer brands with employer brands**

Companies will do well to dovetail their employer brand and external customer brand in a way that will beautifully capture the essence of the brand. In doing so, companies can woo top-notch Talent

big time. An organization which has a scale, size and sweep will always enjoy groundswell of awareness. People would have already formed opinion of it. Hence it is imperative that external and internal brands are in perfect alignment with each other and should not be seen affecting each other. When external brand dovetails snugly with employer brand, existing and potential employees will get the complimentary messages mutating in to a signature statement of the company. If the employer branding breathes, oozes and further solidifies the values articulated via external brand, a potential employee who wants to get in to the company will consistently get the same complimentary message.

### **Each impression counts dearly**

A job seeker evinces an interest to work in a company on the basis of his /her first impression of the company. The impression he/she has formed may not remain static. It may keep on changing forever. Employee's each and every touch point with the brand will inexorably affect their perception vis-à-vis the employer brand. So the process of creating a strong employer brand starts even before the recruitment process gets underway. Companies will have to take a re-look at each and every touch point a person have with its brand. He/she may see the company's billboard/ hoardings as a consumer. He/she may frantically call your helpline as a customer or in some cases,

as a job seeker, He/she may receive a call from the company after attending interview. Company will have to collaborate with HR and Marketing department to create that “**unforgettable experience**” for a person at every touch point.

### **Recruitment process should reflect the essence of the brand**

Every stage involved in a recruitment process will irreversibly shape up the opinion of a potential hire vis-à-vis the company and may propel him/her to lap up the job or turn it down. Companies will have to ensure that recruitment experience can beautifully capture the essence of its brand and help it ensnare and engage the brightest talent. Companies will have to reflect on where and how they advertise their vacancies, how easy or difficult it is for individuals to apply for the job, when and how it responds to the job application, stages involved in interview, how interviews are done, venue of the interview, who conducts the interview and how it handles rejection and offer processes.

### **Employees turn in to brand ambassadors**

Organizations will have to ensure that its people actively celebrate, champion, support and embrace the brand and its values. Employees will have to become the strong votaries or advocates of the brand. Each and every employee will have to eat, sleep, breathe, dance the brand. They should understand what a company's brand

epitomizes. Company will have to involve the whole lot of people –starting from Marketing, Finance, Production, PR to people in HR while creating the value propositions. Companies will have to make it sure that the propositions are clearly articulated, properly understood and hardwired in to the DNA of the employees before the brand makes its debut in the market. Employees will have to buy in to the claims the brand represents to make. It is an exercise in hair-splitting if the company splurges megabucks on creating external marketing blitzkrieg to all the potential hires or customers when your existing employees do not live and breathe your brand values. Brand loses its potency and robs of any chances for sale or securing loyalty.

### **Companies should not lose focus in tough times**

Robust employer branding hinges heavily on how consistent the message is and how it is delivered. The message should not change if the economy is on the throes of serious crisis or there is a depressed condition in the market or worse still if the company is experiencing a bout of internal churning. A well-crafted employer brand has a long-term perspective and is predicated on a deep understanding of whom the company wants to entice and retain. A strong employer brand is crucial when things go for a toss. Employees feel secured and sure-footed when the core of your employer brand remains intact. Companies would

do well to remember that the confidence and strong backing of its existing employees and strong reputation among potential hires will go a long way in shoring up the employer brand further.

### **Companies should engage employees at all levels**

Even a strong, well-crafted brand may slide in to abyss if the employees do not support it. Employees can feel thoroughly engaged only if the brand is hardwired in to cultural DNA of the organization. Supermarket major Morrison's conducted slew of workshops and provided supporting tool kits to members when employer branding was put in place

Senior leadership of the company led by setting personal example and made the values important on the list of top priority. The leadership generated Feedback through 360 Degree appraisal system and provided personalized coaching to the employees. Employees became well-poised to convert Morrison's brand vision in to a reality

### **Companies should ensure complete consistency**

All the key stakeholders, from customer to vendor to potential hires expect to see a degree of consistency of a company's brand. Cutting across the functions-be it finance or marketing or sales to logistics –the whole experience will have be fairly consistent in a attraction and recruitment parlance

, it means the look ,tone and tenor and the first hand experience woven in to the advertisement campaign should be bang-on. this can be achieved only through communication ,appreciation and engagement of employees actively involved in the process

### **Keep tabs on the progress**

Companies should monitor the progress regularly. Companies should find out what its current and ex-employees think of the brand. Their inputs are vital and will make it sure that company is on course. Companies should conduct a survey where it can ask slew of questions related to employees and the company. The questions may include, among other things will the employee recommend his./her friend to work for the company? Does the employee praise the company as a good employer? How long an employee intends to stay on with the current company, Are the employees willing to go the extra mile to help company meet its goals? Etc. In the case of ex-employees, questions relating to why they have left in the previous instance and what prompted them to come back can be asked. Companies would do well to carry out research at a frequent interval and follow it up with concrete actions

### **The future of employee branding**

According to Simon borrow; there are four trends that is gathering steam which will impact employer brand in more ways than one.



## **Brand management will hold the key to employer branding**

Employer brand is not just about projecting an image to the existing or prospective employees; it is about the nature of job *per se*. It is a tad easier to tweak around with recruitment activities or administrative tasks. These activities are well delineated, clearly defined and well established. Doing all these activities call for a situation where human resource professionals will have to collaborate with other disciplines. Brand management is a wholly different issue. Brand management entails working with varied functions and egg on the talented and powerful professionals to do things out of ordinary. A brand manager has an onerous responsibility to provide a coherent response and a compelling rationale cutting across the entire spectrum of employee or the customer experience. Professionals tasked with recruitment and the internal communications are not well acclimatized with the wide gamut of activities relatable to employee experience. They are yet to emerge as a full fledged employer brand manager. much of human resource manager's time are expended in recruitment and promotional activities .they spend very little time in ushering in the much-needed change in employment experience..

## **HR will spelt up the into two silos**

Take a look around and one can see a good deal of fancy, non HR job designation that is bubbling to

the surface like employee engagement director, people director, talent director and organization development director. In effect ,these development also mean that there is a very strong forcing striving hard to emerge from the shadows of typical "HR department " and the activities dabbled in by it such as administration, process, regulatory compliance, disciplinary matters and compensation .The question that begs an answers is "**what about and who deals with internal communication** " .Another esoteric mystery that defies any plausible solution is '**why the hell internal communication responsibilities fall with in the remit of corporate communication or even marketing**' The reason could be ascribed to the fact human resource department lacks the finesse or expertise in internal communication .one may have to admit grudgingly that it is true, but then it is a classic case of escapism. Human resource is denied unjustifiably its share of place of pride in the board and deprived a voice that wants to communicate whatever it wants to. A highly competent and confident HR executive will score high on internal communication that any typical PR for the simple reasons that he/she understand his/her employee psyche better than anyone else . Such HR Executive will have to be a part of charmed circle of or act as a sounding board to CEO.

CEO of tomorrow will spend great deal of the time on their reputation as an employer.

CEO in the conceivable future is going to expend their time increasingly on their reputation as a

employer rather than with investors. Best of the CEO'S are doing it already. But they are still in distinct minority. When you have a CEO who pays attention to reputation, people measurement will get a fillip in the reviews and appraisals in the same manner as marketing, IT and finance

## Conclusion

Employer branding is here to stay. Hitherto, human resources in many organizations adopted a piecemeal approach vis-à-vis employer branding. Amidst all the confusion, conundrum and chaos, a semblance of order is definitely manifesting itself. Increasingly, growing number of agile, fleet-footed and innovative companies are putting in place a slew of strategies that will help them acquire the ability to manage their existing environ. Employer branding has a strong power to provide an organization with competitive advantage that will help them to ensnare, retain and get maximum out of the top-notch talent. The old shibboleths like **"job-for-life," "I will-be -eternally -loyal-to-my-organization"** have become outmoded, moth-eaten and shop worn. New idioms like **"what-the heck? I -will-move -out -to move-up -the-ladder"** has found a grater resonance amongst employees today. In such event, it is employer branding which can be a point of differentiation. Surely employer branding as a concept has come in style. Companies can ignore it at their own peril

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